

THE THREE FRIENDS.

I have never been able to account for the close friendship that bound us together—Buck, Brandy, and me. Perhaps it was because we were all about the same age. I was thirteen then. It might have been because we had many tastes in common. Certainly we loved one another very dearly, and, I believe, very tenderly. When they came from the field at night, I met them at the gate, and hugged them with great energy, and kissed them outright, and brought them their supper, and waited upon them while they ate. Buck and Brandy, be it known, were great, gaunt Texas oxen, with horns that measured five feet between the tips.

I had no child associates, and did not want any; for Buck and Brandy filled my susceptible heart. No matter where they saw me, they would come to me that I might scratch their ears and faces, and hug their great old necks and noses to my heart's content. Ah, happy, happy days! ah, sweet and tender memories!

Why, it was their greatest happiness to munch grass and hay from my hand; and when I scratched them with a curry-comb, they actually went into ecstasies. Every Sunday we had a great time together. I would mount one or the other, and he would, of his own accord, swing his long, gaunt legs in an ungainly trot, just to please me. After romping until weary, we would hunt a shady place and go to sleep. My favorite position was to sleep with my arms around the neck of one, and my head resting on it; and frequently my slumbers would be disturbed by the painful rasping of a great elastic file on my head. It would be the other or caressing me in my sleep by licking my head; and in those days my mother was addicted to the habit of cutting my hair very short.

I don't believe those patient, kind, noble old fellows ever had a mean thought or a sordid motive. It is true they were not considered handsome; but they really had glorious eyes, and long, ravishing lashes; and in my fondness for them I thought there was nothing so grandly symmetrical as their ponderous legs, nor anything of such a beautiful golden color as their shaggy russet hides.

It was only by actions (which were, indeed, unmistakable) that they could exhibit their strong attachment to me, and delicacy forbids that I should state my conviction of their thoughts on the subject. But we were great friends. I laid bare to their gaze the innermost secrets of my heart, and they never betrayed me.

In attempting a narration of the facts that are the greatest sorrow that has fallen upon my life, unmanly tears dim my sight. But I trust they will not be treated with ridicule, for they are sacred, and I am not ashamed of them.

On the evening of a holiday Buck came home alone. He and Brandy had spent the day together in a shady hollow near the house, and I had not seen them since morning. I let down the bars for Buck, who hesitated before coming into the lot. He looked up and down the lane, and loved in a lonely, distressed way.

"Where is Brandy, old fellow?" I asked.

Buck could only shake his head mutely and ominously, and then he walked into the lot, looking quite forsaken. It may be stated that he was very choice in the matter of associates, Brandy and I being his only friends. Consequently, with Brandy gone, half of Buck's world and half his heart were gone.

I was very uneasy. I ran about through the fields and meadows, calling my truant friend; but he did not answer me, and it was late in the night before I abandoned the search through weariness. It smote me to the heart to return alone, and find poor Buck with his head still over the bars awaiting me, and looking very desolate. Neither Buck nor I could eat anything that night, for we were filled with forebodings; nor could we sleep—I am sure I did not; and when I went to Buck at daybreak, I found him wide awake, and his eyes were weak and watery.

About breakfast-time a neighbor came to the house, and said that he had found Brandy lying in an old field, and that he was evidently poisoned with ivy. My heart sank. Poor, poor Brandy! Alone all night, sick and suffering, with not a friendly word to cheer him, nor a kind hand to allay his pain! I felt a great choking, and thought my heart would break; and I hastened, with some men and several remedies, to my dying friend. We soon found the poor, dear old fellow. He partially raised his head when he saw me approaching, and whisked his tail feebly. I threw my arms around his neck, and sobbed with a breaking heart, for I knew the end had come.

Although the sufferer heroically strove for mastery over the pain, a groan of intense agony would now and then escape him. His stout, brave heart could not entirely withstand in silence this terrible assault by death, and he ground his teeth, while his legs quivered.

They poured the remedies down his throat, and, without complaining or resisting in the least, he drank whatever they gave him; and I know that some of the medicine was nauseous and bitter, for I tasted it myself before I let him take it. It seemed cruel to make him drink it, and in such great quantities; but he was very, very patient. This heroism has always made me feel insignificant, for I never could take medicine so patiently. Ah, but I never had the greatness of soul that poor old Brandy had!

I believe that I suffered as greatly as a human heart can suffer, but not so much as Brandy did. It would have been a fulfillment of the greatest wish of my life if I could have exchanged places with Brandy. But that was a selfish wish, for he would have been left to grieve my loss. Why, I felt a great criminal that I was well and strong, (which was untrue, for I was weak and sickly,) while Brandy was in the throes of death. And what would not faithful old Buck have given if he could have laid down his life to save his friend! But Buck was ignorant of the bereavement that awaited him. I thought it best not to let him know.

The men went away, telling me that all would soon be over. I remained with Brandy. I talked incessantly to him when no one was near to hear me. Once or twice I attempted to relate amusing stories, that I might keep him in good heart; but I choked with tears, and threw my arms around his neck, while I sobbed convulsively. I composed a poem by his side, and recited it to him. I believe that he appreciated its merit; and some time after that

I wrote it out for my mother to read, which she did; whereupon she kissed me, and said, I was a dear, good boy, but she hoped I would have a higher aim in life than writing such poetry as they write now-a-days.

I knew that a great and solemn duty must be done—I must prepare Brandy for death. After reflecting on how it could be done most tenderly, I began:

"Brandy, you and Buck and I have been great and famous friends, haven't we? . . . Ah, Brandy, when I think of the beautiful days we have spent together; and the hours we have together slept away; and the bright days we have passed in hunting the meadows for tall bunches of the tenderest grass, when I think of it all, Brandy, and of how lonely poor Buck is at home, waiting, and waiting, and waiting for you; and then for me to see you lying here so sick—very, very sick, Brandy—it is so sad and painful that . . . that . . . it breaks my heart, Brandy! it breaks my heart! . . . Brandy, you have been very good and kind to Buck and me—unselfish and patient always. And so, Brandy, if you should . . . go a very . . . long way . . . from us, we would miss you, Brandy—so much, so much! . . . That is, Brandy, if it were a very long way, and for a long time. I don't mean for a day, or a week, or even a year; but a long, long time. . . . Brandy, . . . a life time! . . . But then you know, Brandy, that we can't always live together. The time will come when one of us three will die, . . . and then another . . . and after that, the other. It will be very hard for those left behind to bear the loss; and the last will suffer more than the others. A great deal more . . . can't help crying, Brandy. I try not to cry, but I can't help it. . . . Brandy, there is a good God in heaven, whom I have often told you about; who, if we love Him, and rely upon Him, is with us in all our trials and afflictions—always with us—in youth, in old age; in joy, in sorrow; in health, in sickness; in life . . . in death. He watches over us, and cares for us; and when, in His own wisdom and goodness, He sees that it is best to take us to Him, He lets us die sweetly and calmly, and then takes us to heaven. . . . There are no trials there, Brandy; no sickness nor suffering; but the grass is sweet, and juicy, and tender, and grows bright and green at the very footstep of God. And there are no yokes there, Brandy—not a yoke in heaven. But, instead of that, there are beautiful chariots in which we shall ride, drawn by golden butterflies and bright-faced cherubim; and cool and shady places, where sparkling brooks, filled with the coldest and sweetest water, flow on forever. Turn your heart to God, Brandy, and your soul to heaven. . . . Brandy, you are very, very ill. . . . My dear, dear old Brandy, you may never be well again. . . . And if God in His wisdom . . . should take you . . . from us, . . . it will be because He wants you . . . to Himself. . . . Brandy, are you ready . . . to die? . . . Put your trust . . . in Him, . . . for he has come! . . . Brandy! . . . O Brandy!"

He died in my arms. I had him decently buried, and I placed a board at the head of his grave, with his name engraved thereon by my own hand; and the willow that I planted there is green to-day.

During the fourteen years that have passed since Brandy died, I have been in many strange places, and have met many strange faces; but the memories that cluster around the death of Brandy, and those that linger about the loneliness of Buck, and his slow pining away and final death in spite of my constant care and solicitous friendship, are to me sacred recollections, and sometimes sad and bitter; yet more often sweet and tender, and always tender. I am left alone, and frequently the loneliness is very oppressive; and the strongest yearnings of my heart reach out for the tried and true friends of my childhood. Yet I shall fight the hard battle of life with all the strength that God has given me, hoping that my heart may not become hardened or my memory dulled. But throughout all these fourteen years of strange vicissitudes there has been one sting in my conscience: I believe I should not have kept the truth from Buck. I think it was wrong to let him die in ignorance, for he might have thought that Brandy willfully deserted us. Had I carried him to see Brandy's dead body, his mind would never have been in doubt, and we could have consoled each other, and become more reconciled.

Still I hope and believe that when the time shall come for the Father to gather to His bosom me, the humblest of all His children, I shall find Buck and Brandy in the choicest of heavenly pastures, and that Buck will long ago have forgiven and forgotten everything. W. C. MORROW.

FRESNO CITY, CAL., MAY, 1881.

The various signs of spring are thus analyzed by the Boston *Transcript*: The first sign of spring is the feeling that your hat is shabby. The second is that your winter overcoat is getting heavy. If your overcoat is a particularly nice one, this sign will not be apparent. If you live in the country, you begin to talk of improvements—a cupola here, an L there, and piazza or bay window somewhere else. If in the city, you commence your annual talk of shaking off from your feet the dust of the city and moving into the country. Your aunt, or some other elderly female member of your household, has her say again of blood-a-changing, and the consequent necessity for filling the stomach with decoctions of herbs and roots. The dark shadow of the coming house-cleaning broods like a bird of evil omen over your once happy home. The wife of your bosom talks of new carpets and new furniture. The plumber no longer robs you of your substance, the carpenter, and the painter, and the plasterer, and the paper-hanger taking what is left. Anon the dust rises and fills your eyes and your mouth. The wind blows where it listeth. Your landlord has discovered that things are going to boom, and booms up your rent straightway. The shadow of the strawberry short-cake looms up no bigger than a man's hand. Oysters grow into disrepute. Your liver begins to assert itself. The house-hunter is abroad.

Druggist—Doctor, you must prescribe more calomel and less mandrake. I'm all out of the latter, and have an immense stock of calomel on hand, and must work it off this month or make a heavy loss. *Physician*—Tell you the truth, I begin to think that calomel is much superior to mandrake. [Both wink, both smile, and both walk briskly off, like men who have done a good deed.] In unity there is strength.

LITERARY NOTES.

The art of renewing books is a most delicate one, and employs all the skill of experienced workmen. When used in a legitimate way, to preserve and enrich some valuable treasure-trove discovered in a tattered condition, a skilled workman applies with tender care a bituminous solvent to its ragged edges, and literally incorporates, by a paper-making process, each mouldering page into a broad leaf of fine strong paper. This is termed "enlarging," and is a lofty department in the art of binding. Then the once ragged fragment goes through the process of binding in Russia or calf, gilding, tooling, marbling, and takes its place as the pride of the book-shelf. When part of the Cottonian Library was burned in 1731, some valuable manuscripts were by the influence of the fire drawn into a solid ball. Some of those rescued were given over to the enlarger, and may be considered the brightest triumphs of the art. They may now be seen at the British Museum. But there are other processes of renewing which are scarcely so honorable, namely, the manufacture of rare or early editions of old authors. This is done by staining the paper, imitating closely the decorated capitals, and reprinting accurately all defects. The production of first folio Shakespeare has been a profitable piece of business. Paris is the centre of the renewing trade, though it is also practiced to a small extent in England. Apropos of renewing, many collectors scorn its aid, and will only purchase imperfect copies. At a large book sale, where many mutilated volumes had sold very well, one lot found very languid bidders, on which the auctioneer exclaimed: "Only £30 offered for this valuable book, gentlemen—a most curious book, and quite imperfect." At another auction, at the beginning of the century, an original edition of Boccaccio, printed in Venice, and of which there were only known to be two copies in existence, was sold for £2,250; and a Didot Horace brought £140.

Novelists vexed with a tender conscience will soon be put to it for choice of incident and subject. Books of adventure are daily sending our juvenile population, armed to the teeth, to be prairie scouts in the Far West, or bold buccanniers on the Spanish Main. In two unusually revolting cases of murder lately committed in Paris and Belgium, the criminals confessed that they were led to the perpetration of their crimes by reading about similar deeds in works of fiction. Now Prince Bismarck lays at the door of Zola, and other French novelists, the error committed by his son, Count Herbert, in eloping with the wife of Prince Garath. Zola and other French novelists, no doubt, are responsible for harm enough in other ways; but if Count Herbert is the son of his father, it is safe to acquit them of this particular sin.

Some one has sent us from Paris a copy of a paper entitled *Journal des Abrutis, par une Société de Ramollis*. This might be construed to mean a journal intended for the reading of bestial people, and conducted by a staff afflicted with softening of the brain. There is a notice on the first page, stating that any one bringing a certificate signed by three physicians declaring him to be "completely brutalized," shall receive the journal for one year. Another notice states that the only branch office is at Charenton (which is a French Bedlam). Altogether, the paper is a queer one, but it is very aptly named.

The latest of the "Epochs of History" series is entitled "Rome and Carthage," and is by R. Bosworth Smith, M. A. It is an abridgement of his larger work, "Carthage and the Carthaginians." It contains nine excellent maps, those relating to battles being the least pretentious, but by no means the least useful. The little book gives one a very good idea of the Punic wars, and will be found a valuable means of refreshing the memory. We can scarcely speak too highly of this series. We have read them all, and there is not one which falls below mediocrity, while most are far above it. Each is by some writer who has made the study of the particular epoch treated of, and the resulting accuracy is apparent on every page. The author of this visited the ruins of Carthage, and the concluding chapter, describing what remains of the famous Punic city, is by no means the least interesting in the book. Thiers once said that no man could describe a battle without having seen the spot where it had been fought. If it be true, Mr. Smith is an excellent historian. Published by Charles Scribner's Sons. For sale here by Bancroft & Co.

Two very timely issues in the latest batch of the "Franklin Square Library" are "Lord Beaconsfield—A Study," by George Brand, and "Thomas Carlyle: The Man and His Books," by Wm. Howie Wylie. Parts II, III, and IV of the "Metternich Memoirs" are also just out in this series, and to lighten up this historico-biographical batch there are two novels: "Miss Williamson's Divagations," by Miss Thackeray, and "From Exile," by James Payn. Published by Harper & Brothers; for sale by Bancroft & Co.

The death of Mr. James T. Fields is a loss to American letters. As a member of the old firm of Ticknor & Co., later Ticknor & Fields, later Fields, Osgood & Co., as the friend, adviser, and publisher and banker of many of our best writers, living and dead, he has been more closely identified with American literature than any American now living. Mr. Edmund Yates announces that he has been his connection with the *Cuckoo*.—In *Blackwood's* for April, "The Private Secretary" is continued. "Shadwell's Life of Lord Clyde" briefly sketches the career of that gallant soldier. "Vallambrosa" is an account of the famous monastery. "Old Scottish Society" gives a description of town and country life in Scotland seventy-five or a hundred years ago. "Greece and Her Claims" discusses the present situation in the east. Reprinted by The Leonard Scott Publishing Co., 41 Barclay Street, New York. One of the funniest things that has appeared in *Scribner's* Brie-a-Brac department is Mr. H. C. Bunner's "Home, Sweet Home, with Variations," in the current number of that magazine. Had it ought to read "The Home of the 'Put-Luck Club,' in New York, Josquin Miller pretended to leave, left at home the MS. prepared for the occasion, and volunteered to give an extract from Bret Harte instead. The joke of the matter is that the press reporters mistook the travesty for an actual quotation from Harte, and so announced it in the papers. It is called, "King of the Greeks." The leading articles in the May number of the *Reluctant* are a lecture by Mr. Edward A. Freeman on "The Study of History," Mr. Swinburne's noted essay on "Tennyson and Musset," Mr. Froude's sketch of "John Henry Newman," an article by Professor Stanley Jevons on "The Rationale of Free Public Libraries," and another from the *Spectator* on "Carlyle's Reminiscences." The remainder of the papers are all readable. Published by E. R. Pelton, 25 Bond Street, New York.

The author of "His Majesty Myself," has written a new novel, "Blessed Saint Certainty," which will be published in two weeks. The drama "Alsace," by Erickmann-Chatrin, recently published in Paris, has arrived in New York. It was written for the Porte Saint Martin Theatre, but the censorship forbade its production. It is a pathetic play, full of patriotism, yet too idyllic for the audiences of a great modern theatre. Lord Beaconsfield's "Memoirs," there is authority for stating, will not appear until ten years after his death, and will be edited by Lord Rowton. Doctor Henry M. Field's "Travels Around the World" is still in lively demand, and the eleventh edition is now ready at Charles Scribner's Sons. The same house has published a new edition of Mr. Froude's narrative of "The English in Ireland." "It is reported," says the *New York Tribune*, "that Mrs. Hooper, a niece of ex-Minister Stoughton, is the author of the new novel, 'The Tsar's Window.'" In May *Scribner* begins Mr. Cable's "Madame Delphine." It begins well. The book will be as good as "The Grandissimes." M. Paul de Rémusat is going to publish shortly the letters of Madame Rémusat from 1804 to 1814. The new volume by Miss Thackeray (Mrs. Richmond Richie) is called "Miss Williamson's Divagations." The price of the new revised edition of the New Testament was announced at twelve shillings. Many publishers are, however, announcing cheap editions. The English University editions of the revised New Testament for American use will vary in price all the way from fifteen cents to sixteen dollars. The work will be ready on the 17th of May. Joel Chandler Harris has another one of his "Uncle Remus" papers in the last number of the *Critic*, which also contains a fine portrait of Lord Beaconsfield. It is a bright number. The *Critic* deserves to be succed.